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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 63rd MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. EMERSON (Portugal)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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In the absence of the Chairman, Mrs. Emerson (Portugal), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF SYLVANUS TIEWUL, FORMER SECRETARY OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

1. The CHAIRMAN paid tribute to the memory of Sylvanus Tiewul.

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence.

3. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) said that Sylvanus Tiewul had been a great asset to the Secretariat and to delegations. He therefore requested the Chairman to convey the Committee's sincere condolences to the family of the former Secretary of the Committee.

AGENDA ITEM 162: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN GEORGIA (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.63

4. The CHAIRMAN said that she had submitted draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.63 on behalf of the Chairman following informal consultations. The text was fairly standard and reflected some of the concerns delegations had expressed about the non-payment of contributions on time and in full. She noted that paragraphs 11 and 12 of the original draft resolution considered during the informal consultations were switched around in the final text. In the second line of the new paragraph 11, the amount had been changed to $1,251,800 gross. She drew special attention to the final preambular paragraph, paragraphs 8 to 13, and paragraph 15.

5. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) said that, since the draft resolution dealt with the apportionment of amounts and the assessment of Member States, his delegation wished to be absolutely certain that it reflected accurately what had been agreed on in the informal consultations the day before. Perhaps the changes to the original version could be provided in writing.

6. Mr. LIM (Peace-keeping Financing Division) explained that paragraph 11 of the original draft resolution was identical to paragraph 12 of the final version. Paragraph 12 of the original version had begun: "Decides, as an ad hoc arrangement, to apportion an additional amount of $994,400 gross ($979,200 net) for the period from 1 February to 31 March 1994 ...". The remainder of the paragraph had been identical to paragraph 11 of the final version. Member States were still being assessed $994,400 gross ($979,200 net); however, for accounting purposes, the amount was presented in the resolution as an apportionment of the total appropriation of $1,251,800 (para. 9), offset by the unencumbered balance of $257,400 (para. 12).

7. Ms. CAIRNS (United Kingdom) said that she would appreciate clarification of the effect of the changes to the original version. In particular, she wished to know the gross and net amounts which Member States would be assessed under the resolution.

8. Mr. KELLY (Ireland) noted that paragraph 14 of the original version had provided for setting off $80,400 deriving from staff assessments against the assessment of Member States. Paragraph 14 in the final version referred to the amounts of $31,700 and $63,600, but made no mention of the amount of $80,400 to be set off from 7 August 1993 to 31 January 1994.

9. Mr. LIM (Peace-keeping Financing Division), replying to the representative of the United Kingdom, said that the amount assessed after all adjustments were made would be $2 million gross ($1,918,200 net). Replying to the representative of Ireland, he said that the amount of $80,400 had not been included because that amount had already been apportioned among Member States for the period ending 31 January 1994. In that connection, he drew attention to paragraph 8 of the draft resolution concerning apportionment in accordance with General Assembly decision 48/475 A.

10. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) said that he shared the concerns of the Irish representative. Two paragraphs of the original text had now been merged into paragraph 14 of the final version. The original draft resolution had also contained a reference to the Tax Equalization Fund and specified an amount in the order of $80,000. He wondered why that reference had been deleted.

11. Mr. LIM (Peace-keeping Financing Division) said that it had seemed unnecessary to mention the amount of $80,400. The Contributions Section had confirmed that it was not necessary to include that amount in paragraph 14 since the Member States concerned had already been credited for the amount apportioned for the period ending 31 January 1994. Under General Assembly decision 48/475 A, the Assembly had authorized the Secretary-General to apportion $2,536,200 gross ($2,439,300 net). The difference of $96,900 represented income from staff assessments. Of that amount, $66,116 had been credited to Member States and the balance had been reserved for credit to the United States of America.

12. Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.63 was adopted without a vote.

AGENDA ITEM 136: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PROTECTION FORCE (continued)

13. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee was resuming its consideration of the item at the request of certain delegations which had expressed concern over urgent pending matters.

14. Mr. STITT (United Kingdom) referred to the decision taken by the Committee two meetings earlier in respect of the commitment authority for the proposed enlargement of UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At that time, the Chairman had indicated that the question of the assessment corresponding to the commitment authority would be considered during a resumed session. Seeing that the proposed programme of work did not include agenda item 136, his delegation

(Mr. Stitt, United Kingdom)

had requested an opportunity to be brought up to date on the question. It was his delegation's understanding that the Security Council was still discussing other aspects of the enlargement of UNPROFOR, that it was likely to take a decision in the near future and that that decision would be consistent with the report of the Secretary-General. He wondered when the Committee would be in a position to resume consideration of the financing of either the partial or the full expansion of UNPROFOR. Perhaps the Controller could address the question and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee could inform the Committee whether the Advisory Committee would have to review what it had done before Easter and perhaps begin all over again.

15. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that he wished to explain the slightly broader financial situation of the UNPROFOR Special Account. The current level of commitment authority granted under the General Assembly decision of 8 April was up to $111.3 million per month. That included a provision for the increase in the strength of the Force by 3,660, which the Security Council had approved on 31 March and for which the General Assembly had granted a commitment authority of $15.9 million per month or $63.6 million for the four-month period from 1 April to 31 July. At the end of March, the General Assembly had decided that the commitment authority for UNPROFOR would be $383.4 million covering the period from 1 April to 31 July, which on a monthly basis, worked out to $95.4 million. The incorporation of the additional personnel pushed the figure up to $111.3 million.

16. At the end of March, the General Assembly had decided that the assessment would be about $272 million under the formula "four months' commitment authority/three months' assessment". The assessment for the month of July had not yet been approved, and the total difference between commitment authority and assessments for the period 1 April to 31 July was $95.4 million. Since the General Assembly had not yet approved any assessment for the strengthening of the Force, however, the total amount to be assessed was $95.4 million plus $63.6 million, or over $150 million.

17. In order to maintain the operation, $30 million per month in cash had been needed for reimbursements before the approval of the enlargement. The enlargement would probably bring the monthly cost to $32 million. The cost of operations would be $75 million per month, meaning that $100 million in cash was needed every month to maintain UNPROFOR. As at 27 April 1994, the cash balance in the Special Account was only $56 million. It was therefore extremely important for Member States to make their payments. The level of outstanding payments as at 31 March had been $454 million. Since the time of the decision to increase the UNPROFOR assessment by $272 million, $90 million had been received (as at 27 April). Currently, outstanding contributions amounted to slightly less than $700 million.

18. The Secretariat was fully aware of the consultations taking place in the Security Council concerning further increases in UNPROFOR strength. The Secretary-General had originally proposed that up to 8,675 persons should be added to the Force, at a cost of $151 million covering a four-month period, or approximately $37.5 million per month. In the event of an increase of 8,675,

(Mr. Takasu)

there would be a substantial difference - perhaps on the order of $20 million - in the level of commitment authority required, and the Security Council would have to submit a request to the Advisory Committee or the General Assembly. The issue was one of timing, and that depended largely on the Security Council. The Secretariat could not predict what would happen, but it would do its utmost to prepare a number of additional cost estimates corresponding to all possibilities. It was hoped that the question would be taken up as soon as possible by the Advisory Committee.

19. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee, which would start meeting from 3 May 1994, was ready to consider any other additional requests that the Secretary-General might submit to the General Assembly through the Advisory Committee following the consultations in the Security Council. The latest report of the Advisory Committee on UNPROFOR was contained in document A/48/878/Add.1, which outlined the Advisory Committee's recommendations on the Secretary-General's request for the additional expansion of UNPROFOR as modified by the Security Council. Rather than agreeing to an additional deployment of 8,250, the Security Council had authorized in resolution 908 (1994) an expansion of 3,500. Even though the Advisory Committee had recommended that there should be an additional assessment of $20.7 million, he had indicated to the Committee that it could wait until it received the results of the Security Council's consultations, which might lead to additional troops over and above what had been authorized by Security Council resolution 908 (1994). At that stage, the Committee would then have to make another recommendation for commitment and assessment.

20. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) expressed appreciation for the speed with which the Secretariat reacted to decision-making in the Security Council, and encouraged it to continue to make efforts to reduce the time needed for the submission of proposals to the Committee, since a combination of commendable speed and a thorough review by the General Assembly inevitably led to decisions of high quality. If he had understood the Controller correctly, the current difference between commitment authority and assessed amounts was $156 million. He wondered whether it would be possible to have the documents on the status of contributions to various peace-keeping operations published much earlier than they were currently published. It would also be appreciated if in future the documents could contain the list that was infrequently distributed by the Secretariat on the total contributions assessed and owed per Member State both for the regular budget and for peace-keeping operations. That would spare delegations the trouble of having to add up the figures in 18 different status reports.

21. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) assured the Netherlands representative and the Committee as a whole that the Secretariat would continue to make efforts to reduce the time needed to prepare the budget for peace-keeping operations. Concerning the current difference between commitment authority and assessed amounts, he said that the figure was actually $159 million. The document on the status of contributions by Member States was an increasingly useful and important document for decision-making, particularly in the Fifth Committee.

(Mr. Takasu)

Delays were probably mainly caused by translation and other related issues. While the status of contributions was usually compiled at the end of the month, distribution of the document had to wait until everything was available in the six official languages. The Secretariat was prepared to provide advance copies on an informal basis, on the understanding that they would not be considered official documents. A table showing the total outstanding contributions was prepared regularly. Concerning the exact format of the documentation, he could consult with the staff concerned in order to explore ways of coming up with the best formula to provide the information on a regular basis.

22. Mr. STITT (United Kingdom) said that if his country's authorities could be given some indication of the period in which they would be expected to find their portion of what could be an assessment of the order of $250 million, they would then do their best to respond within 30 days of the issuance of the letter of assessment. On the assumption that the Security Council would soon authorize the expansion of UNPROFOR on the level originally proposed by the Secretary-General, he wondered whether the Advisory Committee would be in a position to report to the Fifth Committee during the coming week or early in the week thereafter.

23. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the Secretariat had prepared a report on the assumption that the additional deployment would be approved; obviously, that document would have to be reviewed in the light of developments which had occurred since its preparation on 28 March 1994. As soon as the Security Council took its decision, the Secretary-General would submit revised estimates through the Advisory Committee to the Fifth Committee. In view of the very keen interest in the issue, he hoped that as soon as the ACABQ report was ready, the Fifth Committee would be invited to take it up.

24. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee had already taken the decision to concur in the original submission by the Secretary-General of $151 million for the four months and an assessment of $48 million. However, that decision had not been submitted to the Fifth Committee because the Advisory Committee had entrusted him with the responsibility of amending that decision depending on the revised expansion approved by the Security Council. If the Secretary-General approached the Advisory Committee after the decision of the Security Council, ACABQ would submit its recommendation as speedily as possible. He assumed that the original commitment of $151 million would have to be revised in view of the fact that the contingent personnel would not be available as from 1 April 1994, but would be available as from the date the Security Council approved the expansion and also in the number approved by the Council.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

25. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands), drawing attention to the programme of work for the end of May and early June, said that the two separate resumed sessions scheduled for that period would be inconvenient to both the Secretariat and Member States. He wondered whether the Bureau had reviewed the matter and whether the Chairman could shed more light on it.

26. Mr. STITT (United Kingdom) asked what conference services would be available to the Committee in the coming week, when the Committee was going to receive a statement on the status of documentation for the rest of its agenda, and when the Committee was going to have a serious discussion of how it would dispose of the balance of its work programme. It would be useful if, together with the status of documentation, the Secretariat could give members a definitive statement on the items on which, for administrative or budgetary reasons, it was essential that the Fifth Committee should take a decision during the current session. The session had gone on for far too long, and it was time for the Committee to take a decision to close all outstanding agenda items and transfer them to the next session.

27. Mr. GOUMENNY (Ukraine) said that while his delegation was grateful to the Bureau for making it possible to hold a meeting of the Working Group on the apportionment of peace-keeping expenses, it would like to know how the Bureau was planning to organize the work of that Working Group and when that Group's work would be resumed. While his delegation would like the Working Group to start at the beginning of May, it felt that its meetings should not coincide with those of the Fifth Committee.

28. Mr. DAMICO (Brazil) said he fully agreed that the Committee had reached a stage where it should take some decisions regarding its programme of work. As such decisions should be taken on an informed basis, the Committee should have information relating to the status of documentation and reports due from both the Secretariat and ACABQ, so that it could plan its programme of work properly.

29. Mr. YEGOROV (Belarus) said that his delegation agreed with the views expressed by the representative of Ukraine and would be interested in hearing an answer to his question.

30. The CHAIRMAN said that two separate weeks of meetings had been programmed because she had been informed that no conference services would be available for the period 31 May to 10 June 1994. The issue was still being discussed with the Office of Conference Services to see whether the Committee could revert to its original programme of work.

31. An updated document on the status of documentation was available in the conference room. While the Bureau would be happy to receive comments from delegations about the items that they considered important, account should be taken of the fact that consultations would have to be held with the Secretariat and ACABQ as to when the reports which were due would be made available to the Committee. Until that was done, the Committee's programme could not be finalized. Concerning the points raised by the representatives of Ukraine and Belarus, she said that the question of the Working Group would be discussed during the informal consultations scheduled for the afternoon of Thursday, 28 April.

32. Mr. SHARP (Australia) expressed surprise that conference services would not be available to the Fifth Committee from the end of May to 10 June. He was also concerned at the impact which the late start of its meetings was having on the Committee's ability to complete its programme of work.

33. Mr. STITT (United Kingdom) said that he regretted the failure of the Secretariat, the Committee and the Bureau to consult with one another on the timing of the resumption of the Committee's session. The Committee urgently needed to consider how it could best dispose of the remaining items on its agenda. Because of the uncertainty surrounding peace-keeping operations, however, it might be necessary for the Committee to consider requests for their funding during the summer.

34. Ms. ROTHEISER (Austria) said that, like the representative of Australia, she was surprised that priority would not be given to the Fifth Committee in the allocation of conference services. She also wished to know when the information on the status of documentation would be made available to the Committee.

35. Mr. GOUMENNY (Ukraine) said that he doubted whether it would be possible for the Committee to consider at a single meeting the apportionment of peace-keeping expenses, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). He would welcome information on how the Bureau proposed to organize the Committee's work in the weeks ahead.

36. The CHAIRMAN said that information on the status of documentation would be made available later in the day. The Bureau was in touch with the Secretariat on the question of conference services, and hoped to have a solution to the problem by 29 April. As for the concerns expressed by the delegation of Ukraine, it was possible for the Committee to conclude its consideration of the items concerning UNDOF and UNIFIL and thus be able to devote an entire meeting to the question of the apportionment of peace-keeping expenses. The Bureau would prepare a programme of work for the weeks ahead, taking into account the availability of documents. On the question of late starts to the Committee's meetings, as Chairman she fully intended to commence on time, even if only a few delegations were present.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.